

Salary supplement for Harris County district judges
(SB 1239 by Green/Toomey)

DIGEST: SB 1239 would have authorized Harris County to pay district judges up to \$2,000 more than the highest salary paid to a statutory county court judge. It would also have prevented the comptroller from reducing the state salary of district judges to enforce a provision of the General Appropriations Act. (Previous appropriations acts have limited district judges' combined salaries to \$1,000 less than the combined salaries of the courts of appeal justices in the appellate district where their courts are located.)

**GOVERNOR'S
REASON
FOR VETO:**

The governor said that since county court-at-law judges in Harris County are paid \$80,577, the bill would allow Harris County district judges to receive \$82,577 from the county, which is \$3,782 more than what is paid to judges of the highest state appellate courts and about \$26,000 more than the state salary of \$56,135 for district judges. "While I generally don't object to county supplements to district judges, particularly as compensation for work done for the counties, a pay raise of this magnitude would cause discontent, friction, and discord among state judges across the state performing the same functions but receiving differing amounts of compensation," the governor said. "Such a large increase in one county could prove disruptive to the entire judiciary throughout the state."

**AUTHOR'S
VIEW:**

An aide to Sen. Gene Green said the proposed pay raises were intended to compensate Harris County district judges for their overtime work in handling the burgeoning dockets of that litigious county. The governor's assertions about the rest of the state judiciary are immaterial since the bill was not aimed at other judges.

NOTES:

Under current law, the annual salary supplement Harris County pays district judges cannot exceed \$25,000. This is in addition to the \$56,135 paid by the state, while the salary paid to statutory county court judges comes only from the county. If the ceiling on the salary the county pays to district judges were raised to \$82,577 as the governor said, the combined state and county salary would come to \$138,712.

SB 1239 passed the House on the Consent Calendar and
was not analyzed in a Daily Floor Report.